FROM THE PAGES OF SUICIDE SQUAD™

DEADSHOT™

"BEGINNINGS"

1
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FOUR ISSUE MINI-SERIES

OSTRANDER, YALE & McDONNELL

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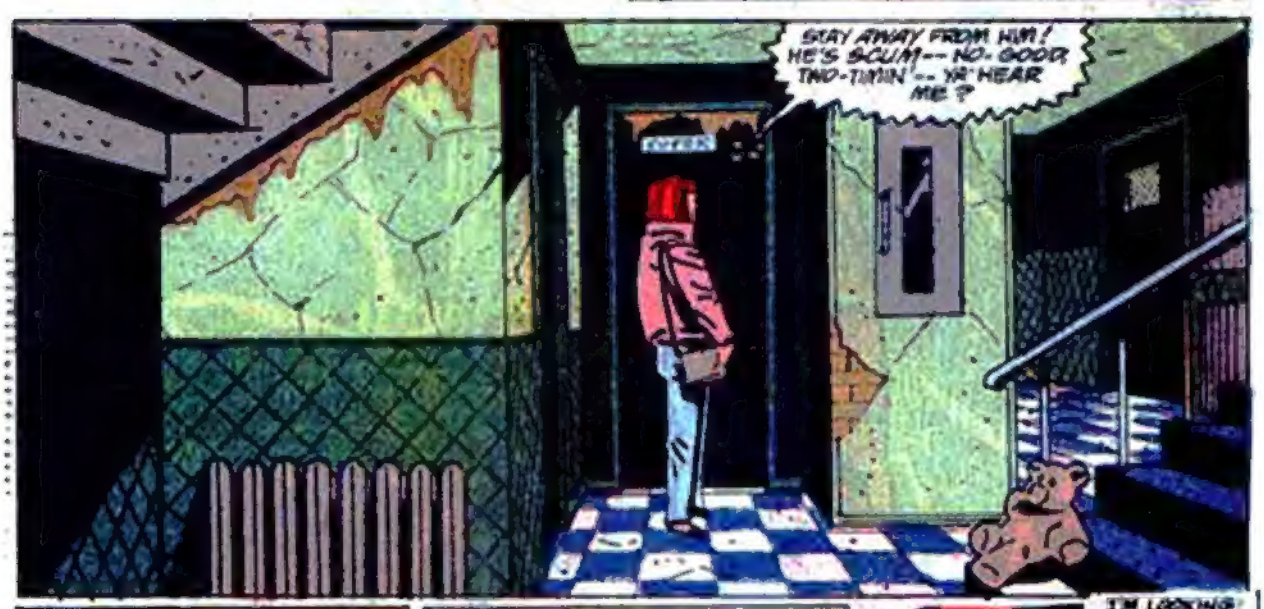

STAY AWAY FROM HIM! HE'S SCUM -- NO-GOOD TWO-TIMIN' -- YA' HEAR ME ?

KNOCK
SUPER

WHATCHA WANT ?

I'M LOOKING FOR FLOYD LAWTON.

AIN'T HERE.
OH... COULD YOU PLEASE TELL ME WHEN HE'S GOING TO BE IN?
"PLEASE," SAYS THE SKIRT TO ME. "PLEASE" - DON'T DO NOTHIN' FOR ME, BABE.
HE DON'T CRASH HERE -- JUST USES MY PLACE AS A LETTER DROP. I FORWARD THE MAIL.

AND IT'S JUST A POST OFFICE BOX NUMBER ANYWAY, SO DON'T GET ANY FANCY IDEAS ABOUT--
--THEN I'LL JUST LEAVE THIS NOTE FOR HIM, OKAY? AND YOU'LL SEND IT ON?

YEAH, SURE, OKAY. HEY-- YOU RELATED TO HIM OR WHAT?

I USED TO BE HIS WIFE.

LAWTON.
SILAGE.
HEAR YOU'RE LOOKING FOR WORK.
HEAR YOU'RE HIRING HITTERS.
THOSE I'M WORKING FOR ARE.
YOU'RE LOOKING GOOD, LAWTON. ALMOST AS GOOD AS YOU LOOKED TO ME IN THE PLACE.
DIDN'T KNOW YOUR TASTES WERE STILL BENT THAT WAY, SILAGE.
SILAS, YOU NEVER COULD GET THAT CLEAR, RICH BOY.
NAW, NAW. I'M STRAIGHT NOW. IN THE PLACE, YOU KNOW, YOU TAKE WHAT YOU CAN. OUTSIDE-- WELL, THERE IS A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY.

YOU KEEP IN TOUCH WITH ANY OF THE OLD GANG?
YOUR OLD GANG? NAW. NOT MUCH LEFT TO GET IN TOUCH WITH.

NO KIDDIN'? WHAT ABOUT DIONISIO?
DIED IN A KNIFE FIGHT. INSIDE.

HOW ABOUT LEON?
ACCIDENT IN THE LAUNDRY ROOM.
BUSTER?
DIED IN HIS SLEEP.

DAMN! AND I NEVER EVEN HEARD ABOUT ANY OF THIS!
WELL, REMEMBER... YOU GOT OUT EARLY, SLAGE.

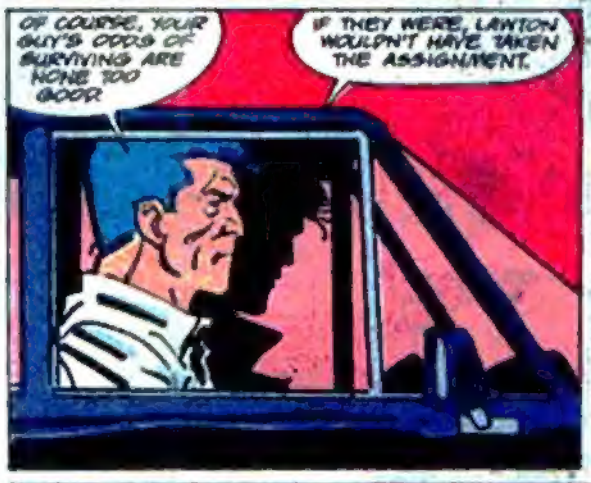
FACT IS... YOU AND I ARE THE ONES LEFT ALIVE FROM "THE OLD GANG," SLAGE.

YOUR MESSAGE SAID WE'RE SUPPOSED TO MEET THIS GUY, RIGHT?
LET'S HIT IT.

THEY'RE HEADING OUT.

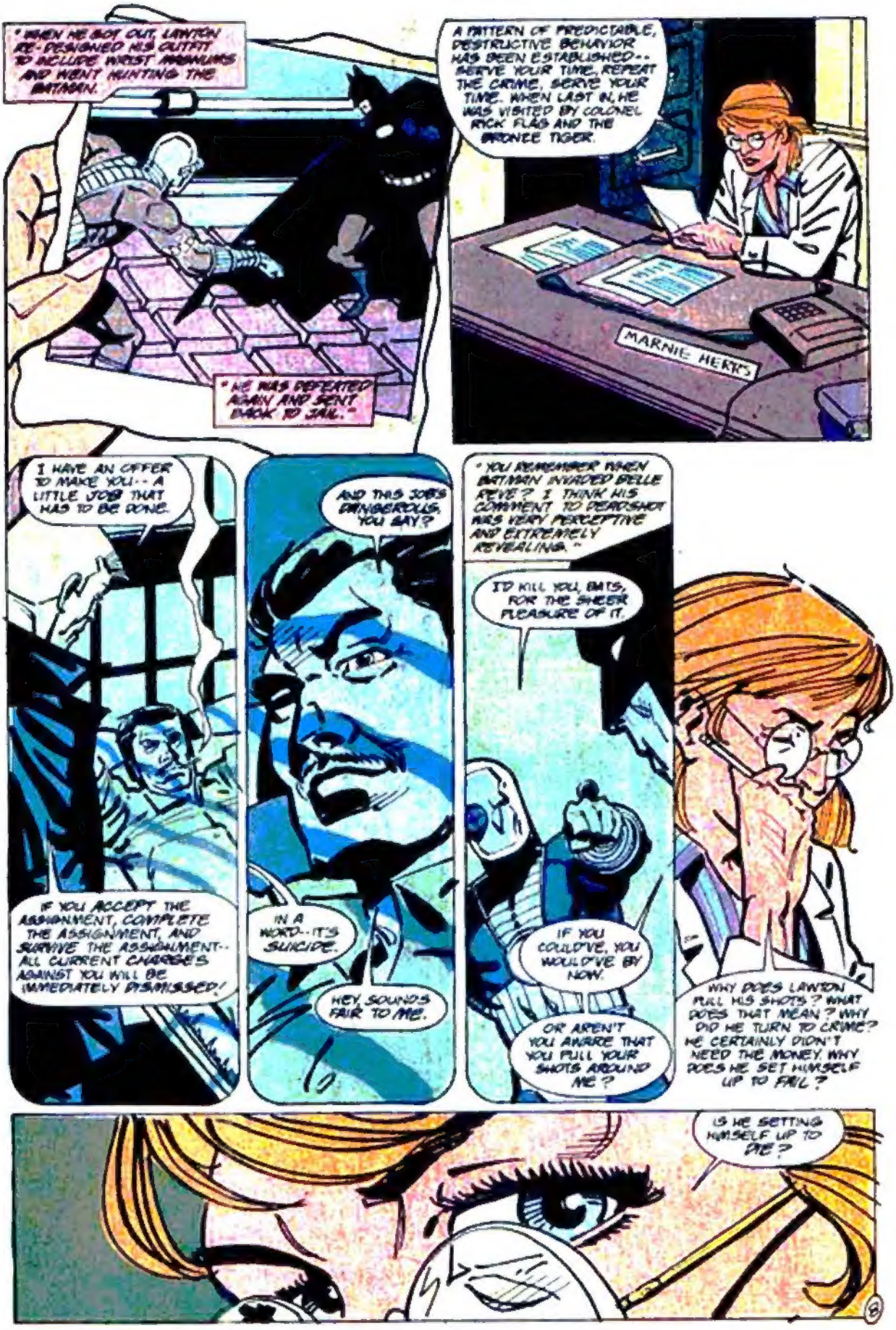
YOUR MAN'S PRETTY COOL, FLAG.
MY MAN'S A CREEP, SIBEL. BUT HE'S OUR BEST SHOT AT EL JEFE.

WE DO GOOD IF YOUR MAN SUCCEEDS. EL JEFE'S A NASTY PIECE OF WORK-- WORSE THAN THE JACKAL AND A HELL OF A LOT HARDER TO FIND. USING A HIRED KILLER TO TAKE HIM OUT IS A GOOD IDEA.


OF COURSE, YOUR GUY'S ODDS OF SURVIVING ARE NONE TOO GOOD.
IF THEY WERE, LAWTON WOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN THE ASSIGNMENT.

HE'S JUST WAITING FOR SOMEONE TO PUT A BULLET IN HIS BRAIN.

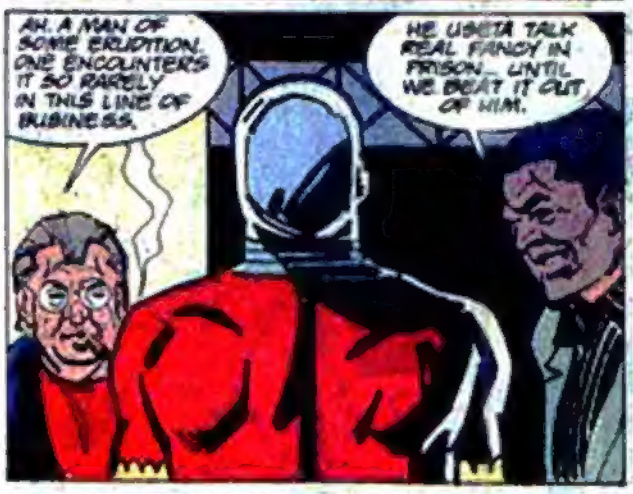
– I JOINED TASK FORCE X AND THE SUICIDE SQUAD. MY ASSIGNMENT WAS PSYCHIATRIC EVALUATION AND THERAPY OF SOME OF THE CRIMINALS INVOLVED IN THE GROUP.
I FOCUSED SPECIFICALLY ON FLOYD LAWTON, A.K.A. PEARSHOT.
"SCION OF A WEALTHY FAMILY. FATHER'S MONEY BASED IN REAL ESTATE; MOTHER FROM THE PITT BANKERS. SOCIALLY VERY WELL CONNECTED FOR A WHILE MADE QUITE A SPLASH IN THE HIGH SOCIETY PACK.
"THEN CAME AN ATTEMPTED ROBBERY AT A PROMINENT CHARITY DINNER PARTY. THE BATMAN INTERVENED AND THE THIEVES WERE ARRESTED. THE INCIDENT HAD A MAJOR IMPACT ON LAWTON.
"HERO WORSHIP? FATHER/AUTHORITY FIGURE? MOTIVATION'S UNKNOWN, BUT THE RESULT WAS THE APPEARANCE OF PEARSHOT, A NEW HERO SUPPOSEDLY FIGHTING CRIME.
BATMAN EXPOSES "HERO"
"THE HERO PERSONA WAS PRETENSE. LAWTON WAS ACTUALLY RUNNING A CRIMINAL GANG. HE WAS CAUGHT AND UNMASKED BY BATMAN.
"THE EVIDENCE WAS DAMNING. THE TRIAL STRAIGHTFORWARD. HE WAS FOUND GUILTY."
7


"WHEN HE BOLT OUT, LAWTON RE-DESIGNED HIS OUTFIT TO INCLUDE WRIST MUNITIONS AND WENT HUNTING THE BATMAN.
"HE WAS DEFEATED AGAIN AND SENT BACK TO JAIL."
A PATTERN OF PREDICTABLE, DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED.. SERVE YOUR TIME, REPEAT THE CRIME, SERVE YOUR TIME. WHEN LAST IN, HE WAS VISITED BY COLONEL RICK FLAG AND THE BRONZE TIGER.
MARNIE HERTZ'S
I HAVE AN OFFER TO MAKE YOU.. A LITTLE JOB THAT HAS TO BE DONE.
IF YOU ACCEPT THE ASSIGNMENT, COMPLETE THE ASSIGNMENT, AND SURVIVE THE ASSIGNMENT.. ALL CURRENT CHARGES AGAINST YOU WILL BE IMMEDIATELY DISMISSED!
AND THIS JOB'S DANGEROUS, YOU SAY?
IN A WORD.. IT'S SUICIDE.
HEY, SOUNDS FAIR TO ME.
"YOU REMEMBER WHEN BATMAN INVADED BELLE REVE? I THINK HIS COMMENT TO DEADSHOT WAS VERY PERCEPTIVE AND EXTREMELY REVEALING."
I'D KILL YOU, BATS, FOR THE SHEER PLEASURE OF IT.
IF YOU COULD'VE, YOU WOULD'VE BY NOW.
OR AREN'T YOU AWARE THAT YOU PULL YOUR SHOTS AROUND ME?
WHY DOES LAWTON PULL HIS SHOTS? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? WHY DID HE TURN TO CRIME? HE CERTAINLY DIDN'T NEED THE MONEY. WHY DOES HE SET HIMSELF UP TO FAIL?
IS HE SETTING HIMSELF UP TO DIE?

THIS'S THE BOY I TOLD YOU ABOUT, ARDISTO.

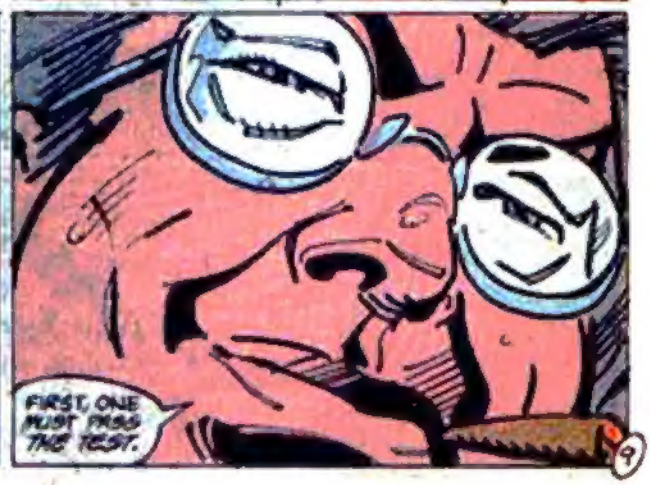
WHAT'S YOUR NAME, BOY?

ORLANDO FURIOSO.


AH. A MAN OF SOME ERUDITION. ONE ENCOUNTERS IT SO RARELY IN THIS LINE OF BUSINESS.
HE USETA TALK REAL FANCY IN PRISON... UNTIL WE BEAT IT OUT OF HIM.

YOU THIS GUY JEFE ?

ME ? DEAR ME, NO. ONE DOESN'T MERELY WALK OFF THE STREET AND MEET EL JEFE.
NO NO NO.


FIRST, ONE MUST PASS THE TEST.

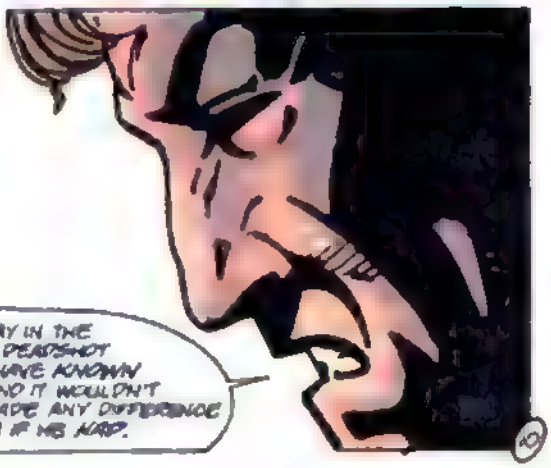
MANY PEOPLE WOULD LIKE TO FIND EL JEFE -- BRING HIM DOWN. THEY SEND MEN TO FERRET HIM OUT. MEN LIKE THIS ONE.

THIS ONE COMES FROM THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, DIDN'T YOU, WILLIAM?
NO! ARIOSTO, I SWEAR IT!

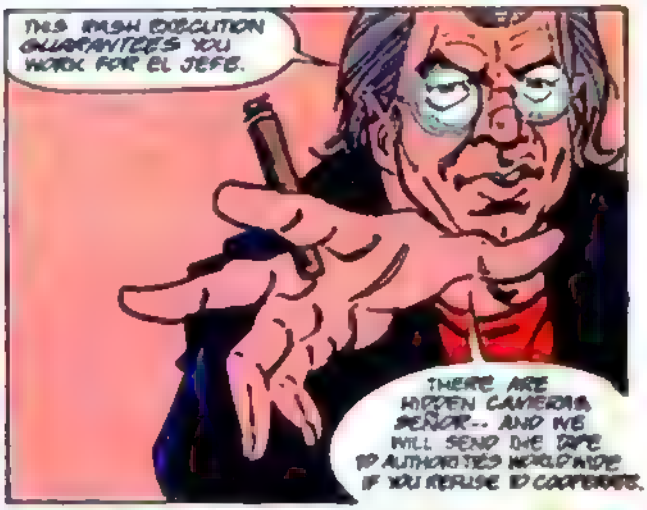
YOU WANT TO WORK FOR EL JEFE? PROVE IT!
KILL THIS TRAITOR.
I AM LOYAL, ARIOSTO! I SWEAR IT!

BLAM!

BLAM!
SONOVA-!
RELAX! ARIOSTO WAS LYING! WE HAD NO ONE THIS CLOSE! ODDS ARE IT WAS ONE OF ARIOSTO'S OWN MEN WHO HAD SCREWED UP IN SOME WAY AND WAS UP FOR PUNISHMENT!

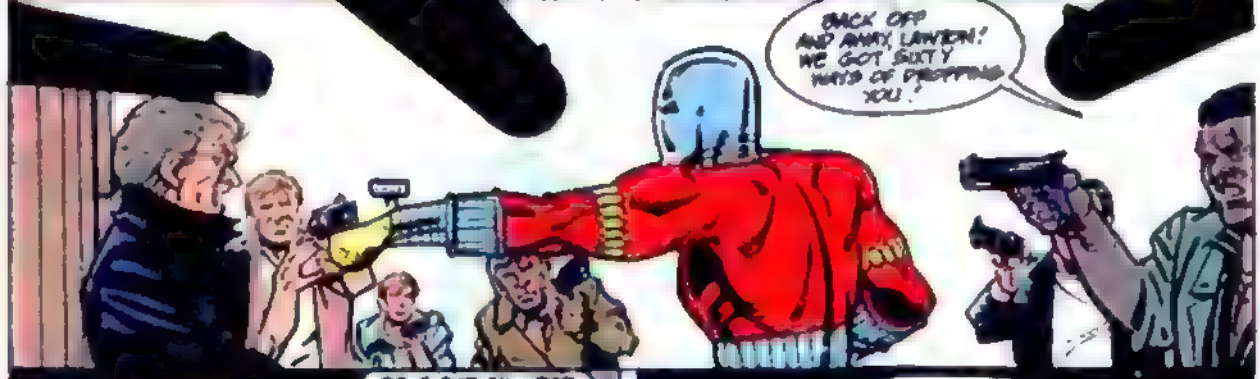

NO WAY IN THE WORLD DEADSHOT COULD HAVE KNOWN THAT AND IT WOULDN'T HAVE MADE ANY DIFFERENCE TO HIM IF HE HAD.

IDIOT! I DIDN'T MEAN TO KILL HIM HERE!
THEN YOU SHOULD HAVE SAID SO.

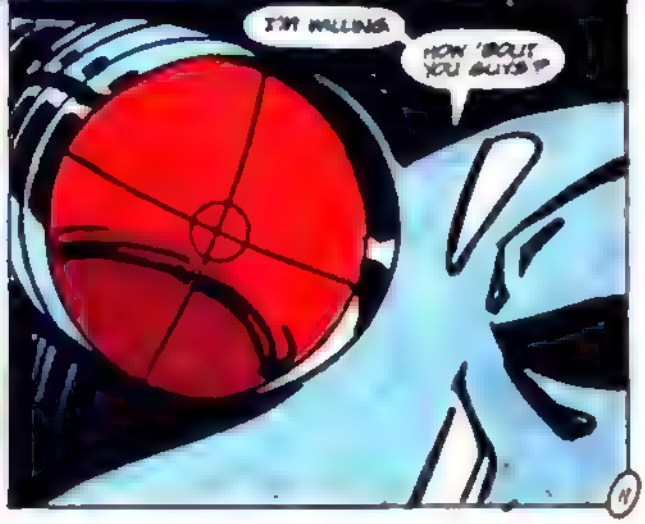

THIS RUSH EXECUTION GUARANTEES YOU WORK FOR EL JEFE.
THERE ARE HIDDEN CAMERAS, SEÑOR-- AND WE WILL SEND THE TAPE TO AUTHORITIES WORLDWIDE IF YOU REFUSE TO COOPERATE.

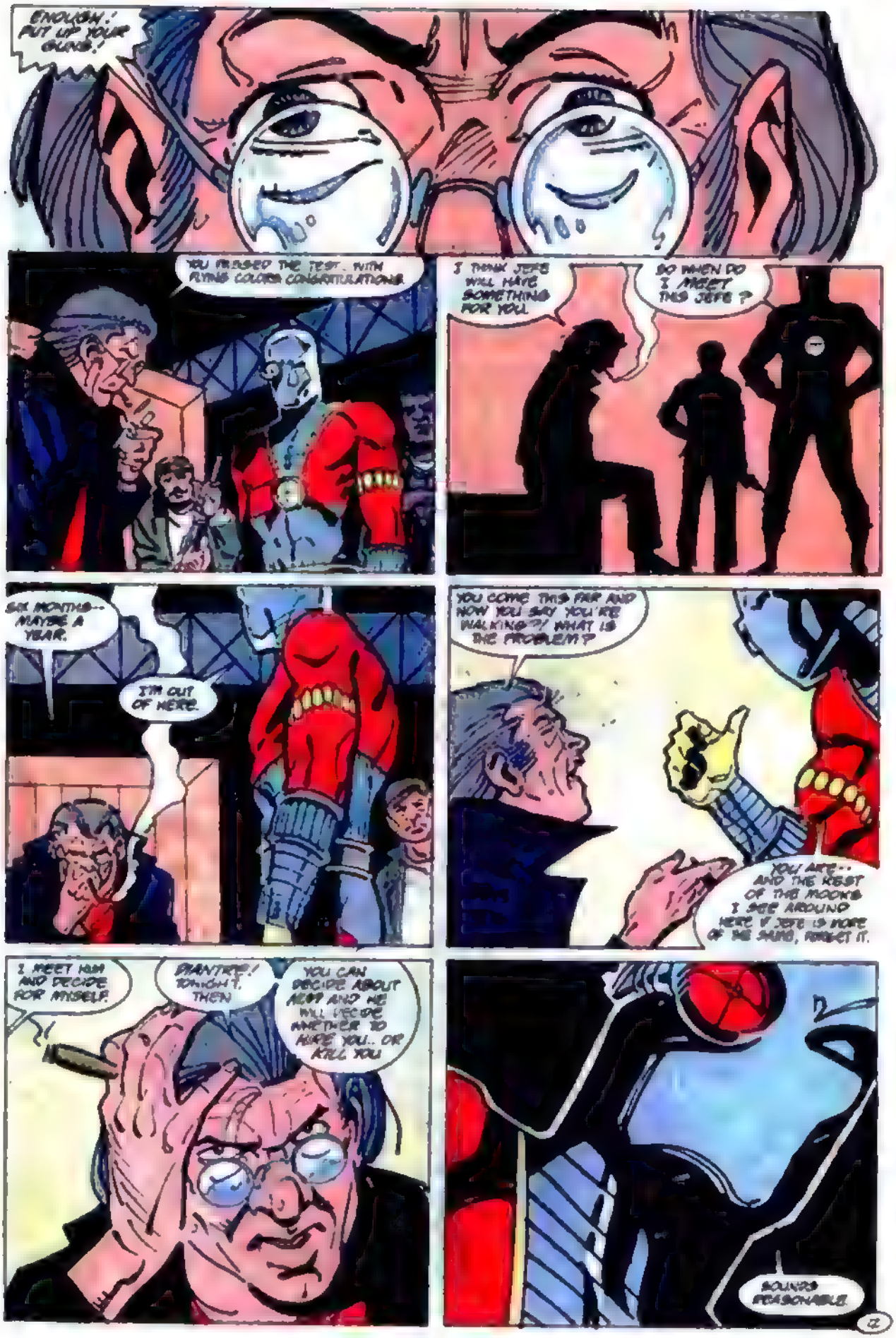
SO WHAT?
THEY CAN ADD IT TO THEIR COLLECTIONS!

WHO DO YA THINK YER MESSIN' AROUND WITH HERE? SOME PENNY-ANTE MOOK LIKE SALASE OVER THERE?
I'M DEADSHOT! DEADSHOT! AND I'M BORED WITH THESE GAMES!

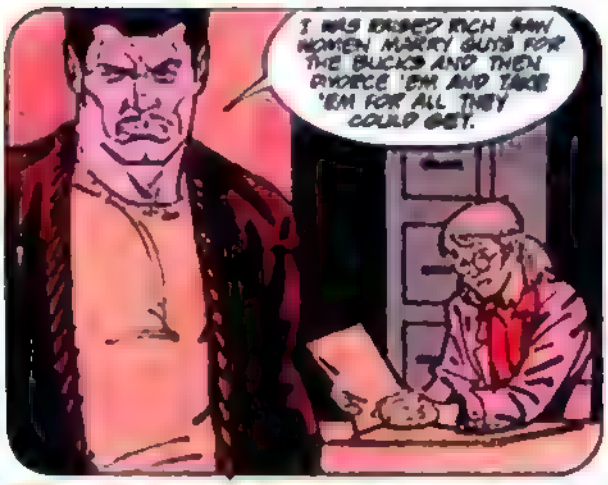

BACK OFF AND AWAY, LAWEN! WE GOT SIXTY WAYS OF DROPPING YOU!

DO IT AND I'LL POP YOU AND ARIOSTO, GUARANTEED!

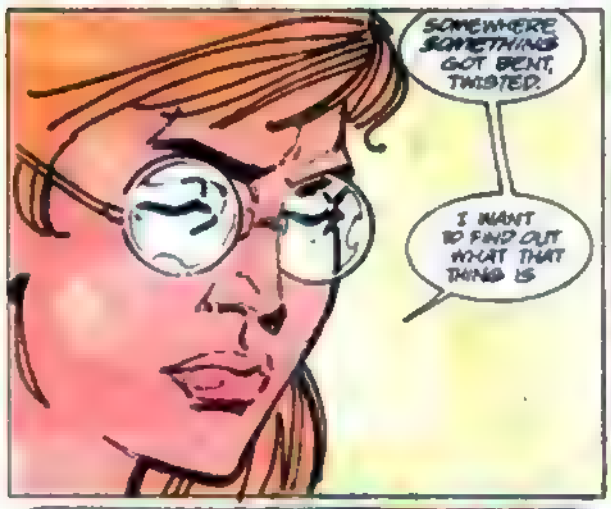

I'M WALLING.
HOW 'BOUT YOU GUYS?

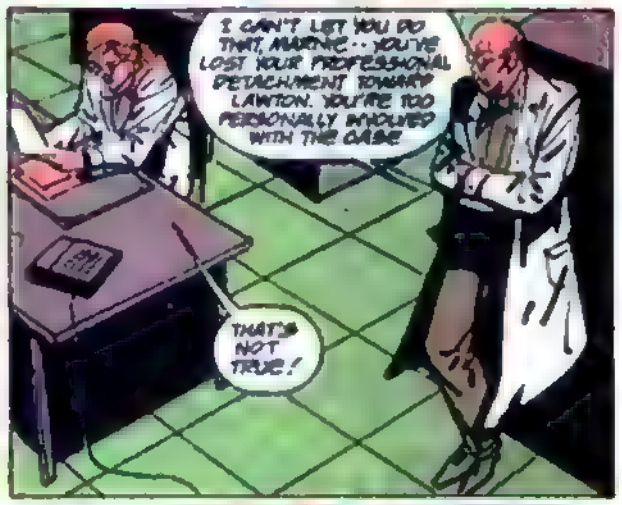

ENOUGH! PUT UP YOUR GUNS!
YOU PASSED THE TEST. WITH FLYING COLORS. CONGRATULATIONS.
I THINK JEFE WILL HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU.
SO WHEN DO I MEET THIS JEFE?
SIX MONTHS... MAYBE A YEAR.
I'M OUT OF HERE.
YOU COME THIS FAR AND NOW YOU SAY YOU'RE WALKING?! WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?
YOU ARE... AND THE REST OF THE MOOKS I SEE AROUND HERE IF JEFE IS MORE OF THE SAME, FORGET IT.
I MEET HIM AND DECIDE FOR MYSELF.
PANTRE! TONIGHT, THEN.
YOU CAN DECIDE ABOUT ME!! AND HE WILL DECIDE WHETHER TO MAKE YOU... OR KILL YOU.
SOUNDS REASONABLE.

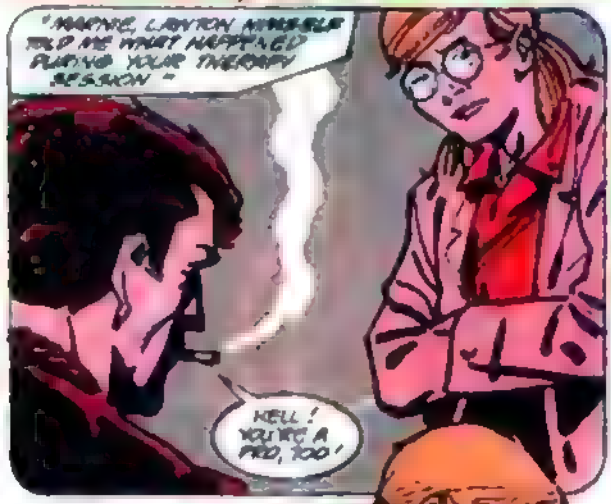
FLOYD... HAS DIFFICULTIES RELATING TO WOMEN.
"HIS FIXATION FOR INSTANCE, WHEN I BROUGHT UP HIS FATHER'S MARTIAL ARTS IN SESSION."
I... HADN'T REALIZED YOU'D BEEN MARRIED, FLOYD, AND HAD A SON. YOU'VE NEVER MENTIONED THEM.
WHY IS THAT?
IT'S OVER. I'M NO GOOD FOR THEM OR THEM FOR ME.
NO GOOD TALKING ABOUT IT.
WHY... WHY DID THE MARRIAGE FAIL?
I NEVER PRETENDED WITH HER. I WAS ANYTHING BUT WHAT I WAS.
SHE COULD NEVER SEE ME EXCEPT AS SHE WANTED ME TO BE.
HIS ANTIPATHY TOWARD WOMEN SEEMS TO BE ROOTED IN HIS PAST.


I WAS RAISED RICH. SAW WOMEN MARRY GUYS FOR THE BUCKS AND THEN DIVORCE 'EM AND TAKE 'EM FOR ALL THEY COULD GET.

REAL PROS MAKE YOU PAY ONCE. NOT ALL YOUR LIFE.

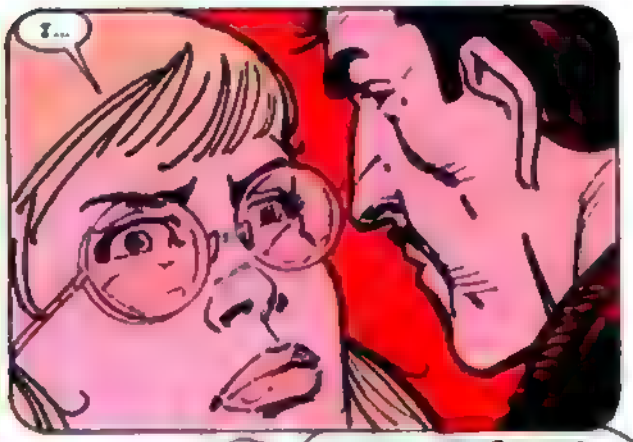

SOMEWHERE SOMETHING GOT BENT, TWISTED.
I WANT TO FIND OUT WHAT THAT THING IS

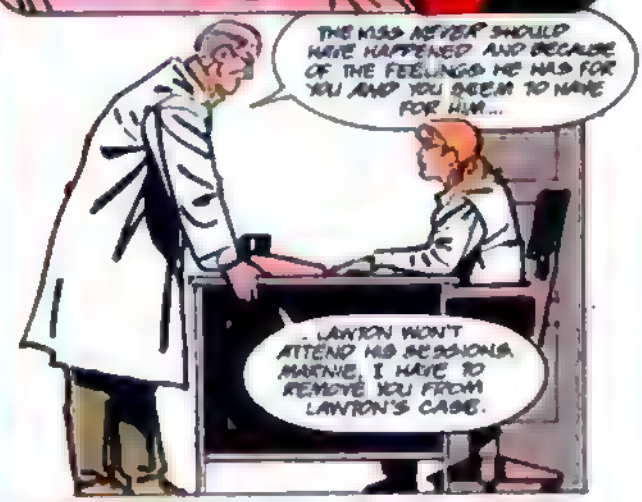

I CAN'T LET YOU DO THAT, MARINE.. YOU'VE LOST YOUR PROFESSIONAL DETACHMENT TOWARD LAWTON. YOU'RE TOO PERSONALLY INVOLVED WITH THE CASE
THAT'S NOT TRUE!

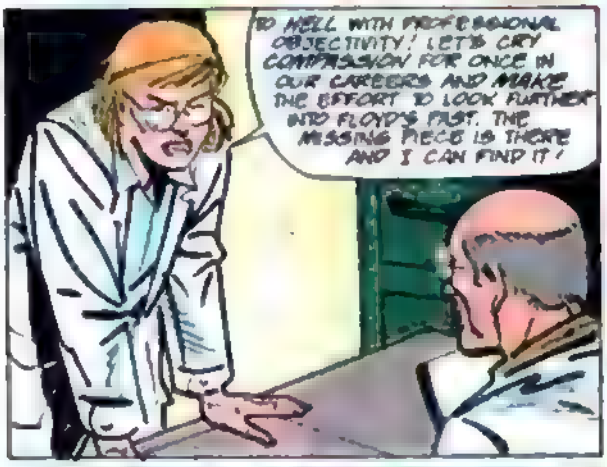

"MARINE, LAWTON HIMSELF TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED DURING YOUR THERAPY SESSION –
HELL! YOU'RE A PRO, TOO!

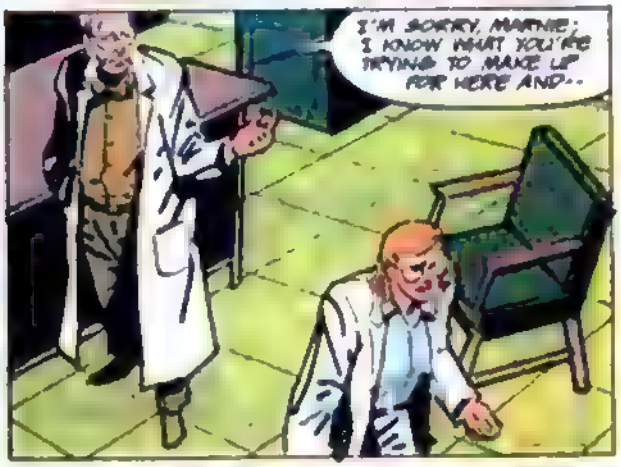
ALL THIS CARING! IT'S WHAT YOU'RE PAID TO DO! YER JUST ANOTHER PRO!

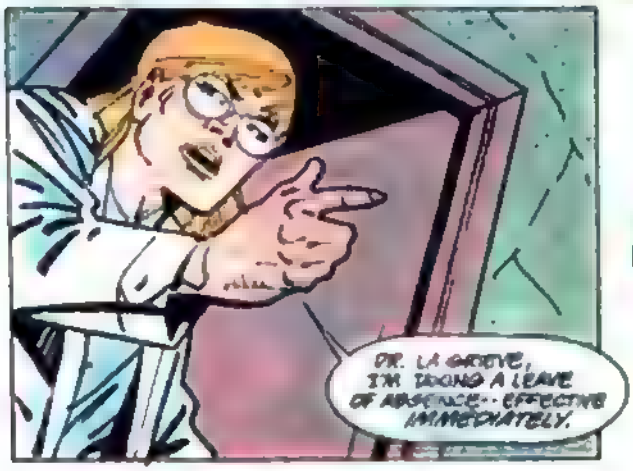
WHAK!

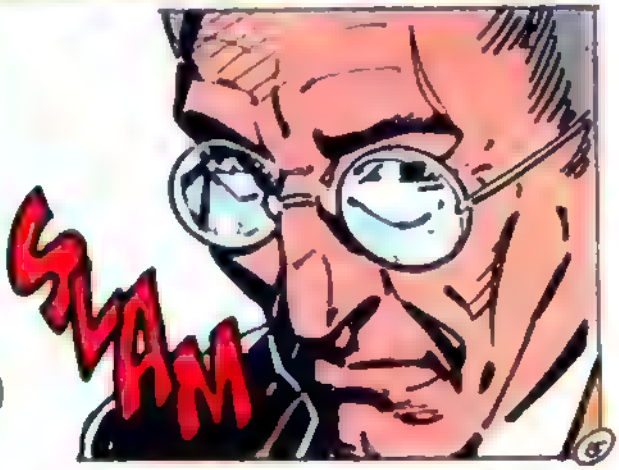

I...


THE KISS NEVER SHOULD HAVE HAPPENED AND BECAUSE OF THE FEELINGS HE HAS FOR YOU AND YOU SEEM TO HAVE FOR HIM...
...LAWTON WON'T ATTEND HIS SESSIONS, MARNIE. I HAVE TO REMOVE YOU FROM LAWTON'S CASE.


TO HELL WITH PROFESSIONAL OBJECTIVITY! LET'S CRY COMPASSION FOR ONCE IN OUR CAREERS AND MAKE THE EFFORT TO LOOK FURTHER INTO FLOYD'S PAST. THE MISSING PIECE IS THERE AND I CAN FIND IT!

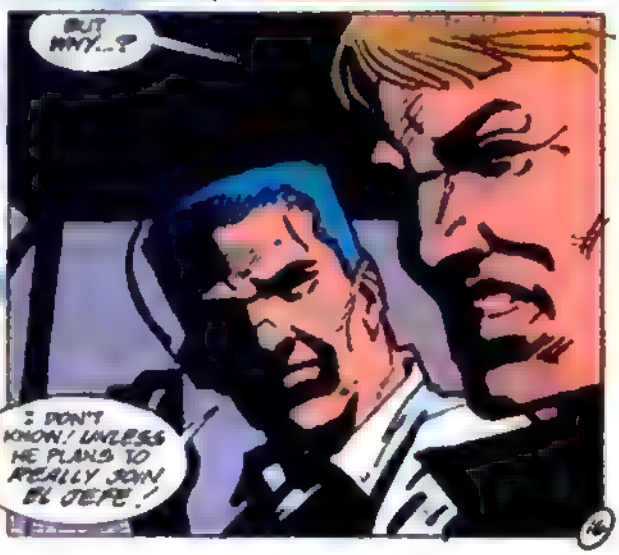

I'M SORRY, MARNIE. I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO MAKE UP FOR HERE AND...

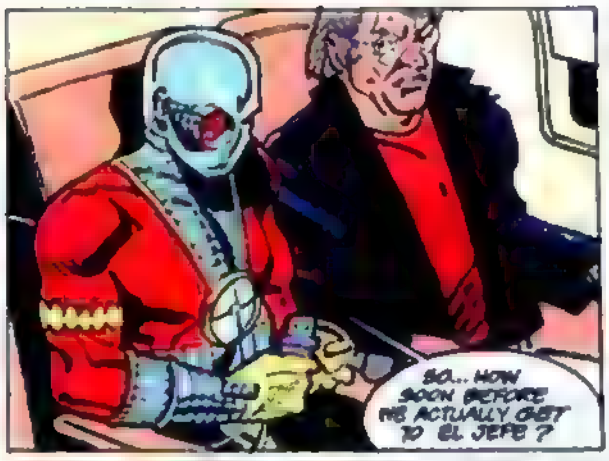

DR. LA GRIEVE, I'M TAKING A LEAVE OF ABSENCE... EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY.

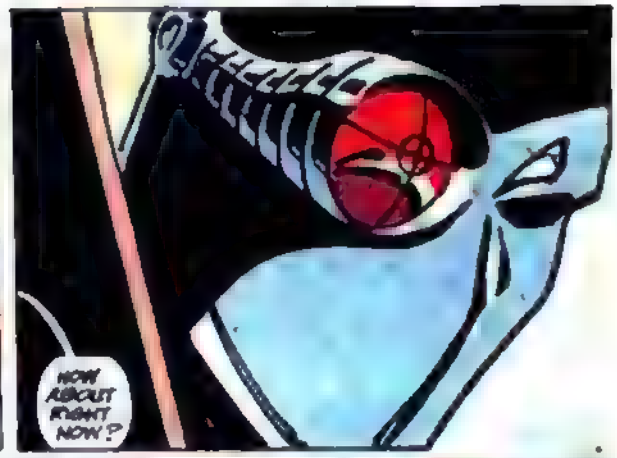

SLAM

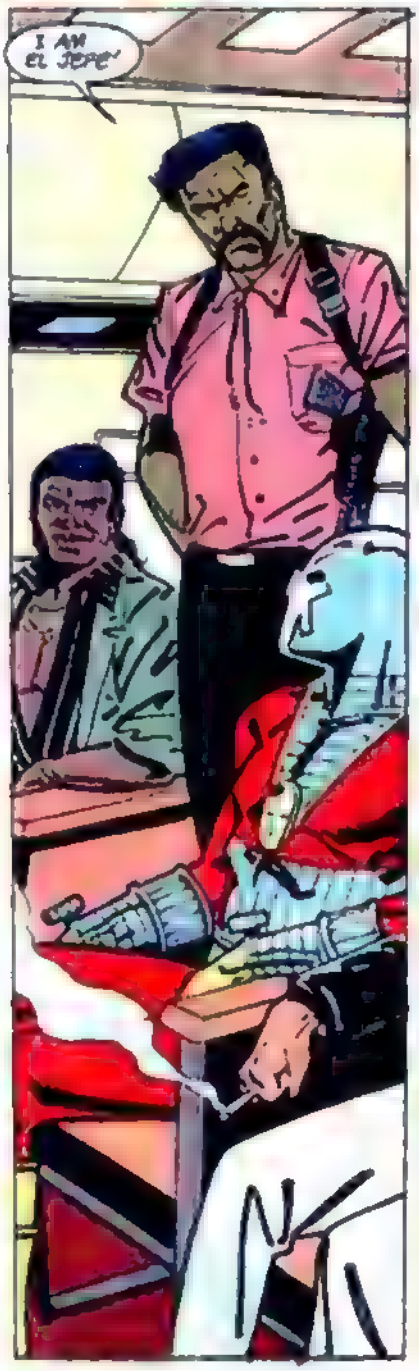
THE PLANE WILL TAKE ALL OF US TO EL JEFE. A PRECAUTION TO PREVENT US FROM BEING FOLLOWED

DAMN HIM TO HELL! HE'S TOSSED AWAY THE MICROPHONE!

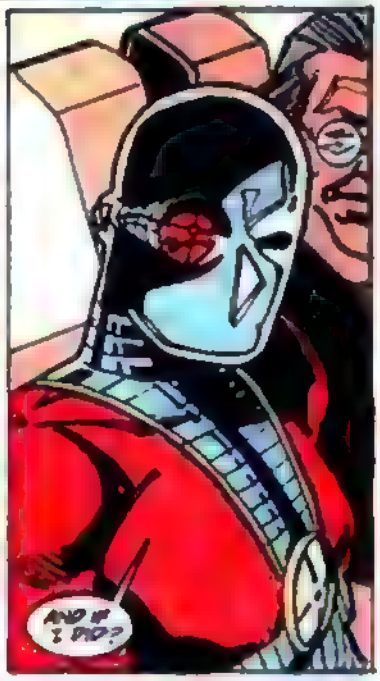

BUT WHY...?
I DON'T KNOW! UNLESS HE PLANS TO REALLY JOIN EL JEFE!


SO... HOW SOON BEFORE WE ACTUALLY GET TO EL JEFE?


HOW ABOUT RIGHT NOW?

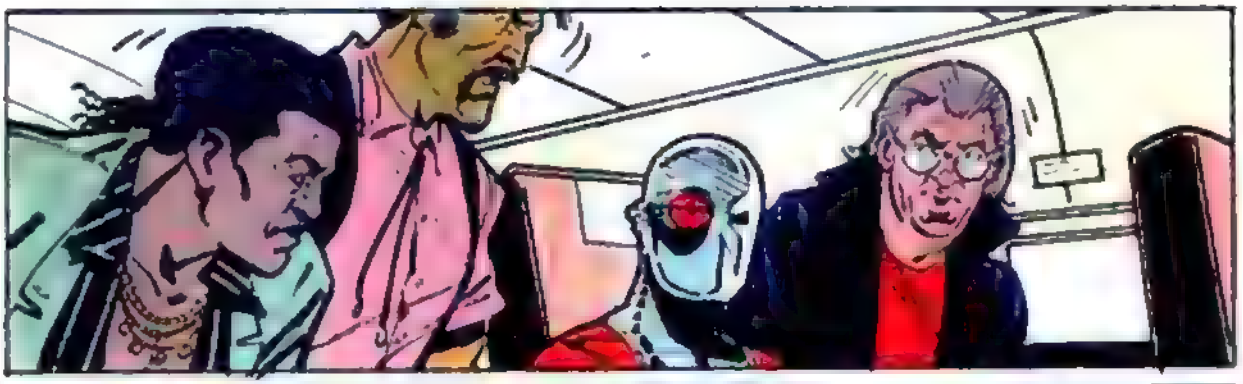

I AM EL JEFE!

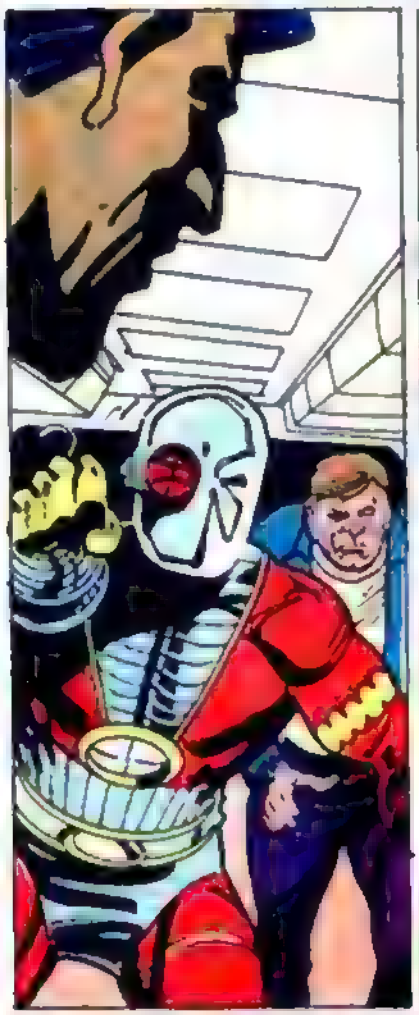
I NEVER STAY IN ONE PLACE LONGER THAN A FEW HOURS. I CHANGE MY TRANSPORTATION CONSTANTLY. THUS I STAY ALIVE, SEÑOR.
MANY WANT ME DEAD YOU, PERHAPS?


AND IF I DID?

YOU COULD DO NOTHING HERE!
THE CABIN IS PRESSURIZED! ONE STRAY SHOT-- ONE TINY HOLE IN THE FUSELAGE-- AND WE WOULD ALL DIE!

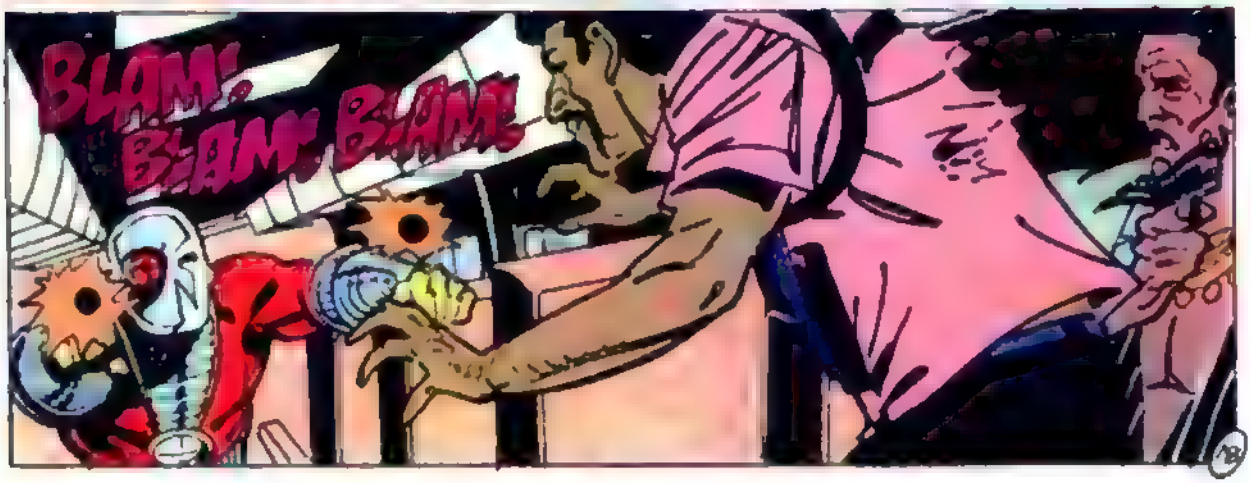
YOURSELF INCLUDED!
SO?



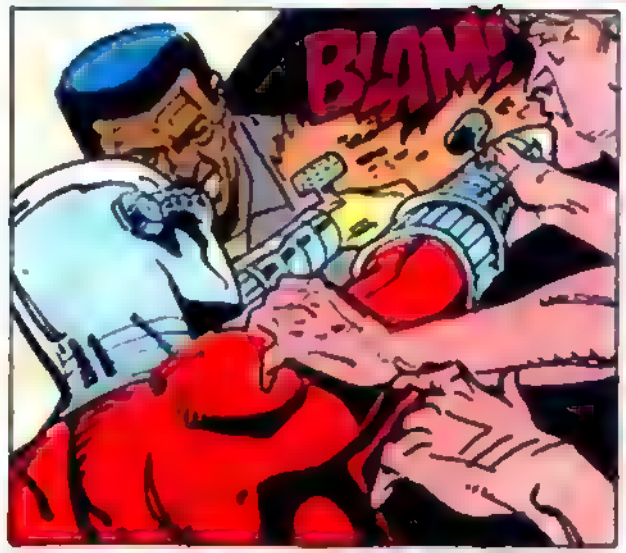


BLAM!

NO, YOU FOOL! NO GUNS!


BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

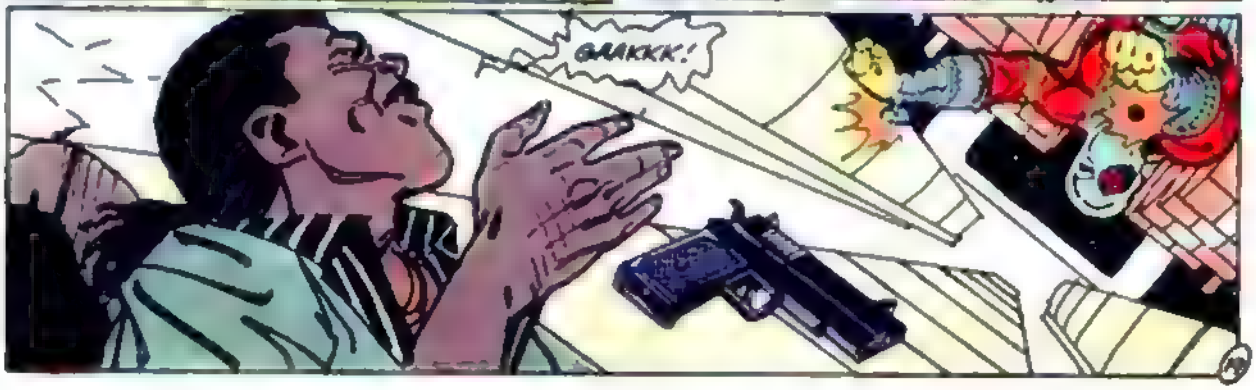
HOLD 'M! HOLD 'M STILL SO I CAN KILL HIM!!


BLAM!

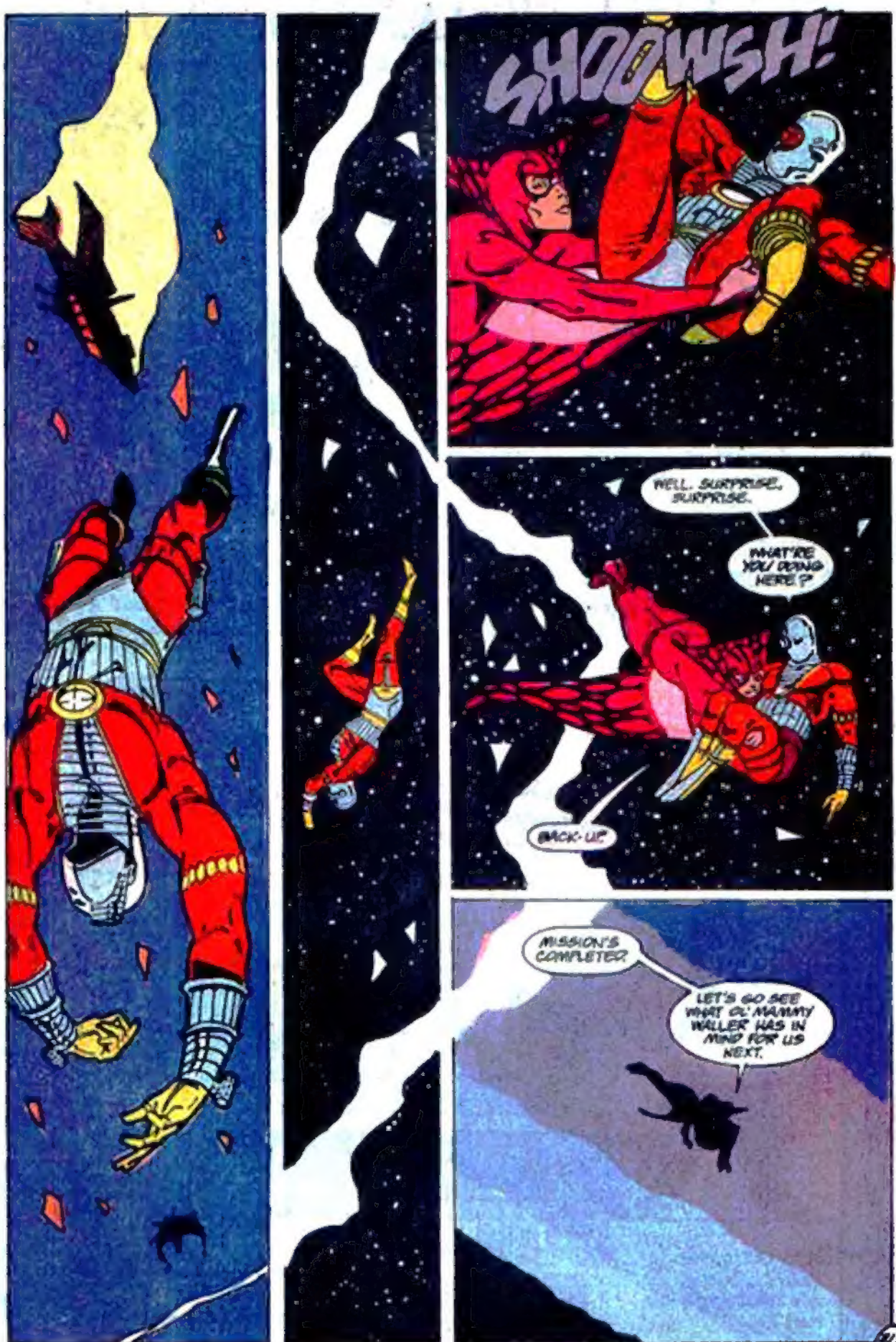
NOOOOOO!

GAHHHHHH!

YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE LEFT, SLADE!
THE ONLY ONE OF THE "OLD GANG" I COULDN'T FIND!


GAAKKK!

KA-BOOOOMM!
WOOOSHHHH!


SHOOWSH!
WELL. SURPRISE, SURPRISE.
WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE?
BACK-UP.
MISSION'S COMPLETE?
LET'S GO SEE WHAT OL' MAMMY WALLER HAS IN MIND FOR US NEXT.

NEXT:
SUFFER THE CHILD!

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"Floyd Lawton could have been me—twisted!"

—Batman

Deadshot.

Of all the villains Batman has faced, Deadshot is probably the only one to rise from obscurity to become a greater menace in later appearances. In the beginning, Bill Finger, Bob Kane, Jerry Robinson, Dick Sprang and a few others set out and created a cast of Batman villains that today remain as fresh and potent as they did in the early 1940s. It started with Hugo Strange and was followed by The Joker, The Cat (later Catwoman), the Penguin, the Riddler, Tweedledum & Tweedledee, the Scarecrow...

Over the last 50 years, they have been back time and again, joined over the years by the likes of Blockbuster, Mr. Freeze, Poison Ivy and recent recruits like the Corrosive Man and the KGBeast.

Yet, when Deadshot was introduced in BATMAN #59, June-July 1950, he appeared in one of four stories that issue and disappeared, not to be seen again until he was resurrected in 1977 for a return match. He has appeared on and off since then, but he really caught people's imaginations when John Ostrander recruited him for the fledgling SUICIDE SQUAD. And now he has his own mini-series.

"He claimed to be my superior, and he wasn't wrong by much!"

—Batman

To understand how we got here, let's take a look back at the past. The story was called "The Man Who Replaced Batman," and it was the lead feature in that issue of BATMAN, #590. Floyd Lawton was introduced as one of Gotham City's idle wealthy, with a yen to do something with his life. Unlike Bruce Wayne, he chose to use his skill with a gun for personal gain and set out to control Gotham's underworld. Donning a tuxedo, a black mask and twin holsters, Lawton introduced himself to Gotham as Deadshot, a law-and-order type who was going to prove that he was better than Batman.

Lawton's reasoning was that if he could prove himself better than the Caped Crusader, he could drive Batman away, leaving the underworld for him to plunder and run. In a series of events, Deadshot made headlines, proving he was as good as his word. Criminals were caught faster and with less violence than Batman delivered.

All along, Batman was wary of Deadshot, suspecting something was up, considering how suddenly the sharpshooter turned up in Gotham. Rather than welcome himself to the super-hero fraternity, Deadshot was out to replace Batman, and that felt ... wrong.

Using psychological tactics, Batman tricked Deadshot into losing his nerve for a moment and he confessed all to Commissioner Gordon. Convicted, Lawton went to Gotham State Penitentiary.

"You're right—I've been held here for years—ever since The Batman beat me—while the Scarecrow, Riddler, Catwoman and you passed through—but now Deadshot is free once more!"

—Deadshot

Old Floyd was not heard from again until DETECTIVE COMICS #474, when he reappeared. Steve Englehart has never publicly commented on how or why he chose to revive Deadshot, but it is true that Steve is a fan of the old material and has periodically buried deep within the older comics to find interesting gems to resurrect. It was perhaps during one of these trips that Steve found Floyd and he saw a spark.

Under the direction of artists Marshall Rogers and Terry Austin, Deadshot gave up his tux for a snazzy outfit that made him look more menacing. He was ready for a rematch and in a story that was a tribute to the 1950s with loads of inside references and giant props, Deadshot took on Batman a second time and once again lost.

A telling moment occurs at the story's end. Batman is hurling himself at Deadshot, who takes deadly aim with a wrist magnum, fires and apparently misses, getting caught. This is a bit of business

that is to be repeated whenever he turns up again.

Over the intervening years from 1977-86, Deadshot has been a regular attendee of Batman's Rogues' Gallery. For anniversary stories and the like, whenever the old gang is lined or rounded up, he's there. And every time, he has been somewhat subordinate to the better-known Batman opponents. And every time he finds himself punched out and back in jail.

That is, until Amanda Waller and Rick Flag paid him a visit in LEGENDS #2. Since that scene is re-presented in this very issue, we'll skip the recap and just note that for Lawton, this was a new beginning in many ways.

"I'd kill you, Bats, for the sheer pleasure of it."

—Deadshot

"If you could've, you would've by now. Or aren't you aware that you pull your shots around me?"

—Batman

It has been under John Ostrander's hands that Deadshot has come alive as a character and has turned into something other than just another costumed adversary for the Darknight Detective. We've learned bits and pieces about him since the beginning. He was rich from a family he seemed to hate. He joined the Communist Party to get back at his family. He tried crime because he was bored. Something drained the life out of him and made him a totally amoral individual. He found himself romantically interested in his therapist, Marnie Herrs, but couldn't come to grips with that. Then we learned he had a family of his own, a wife and son. So many pieces and no real opportunity to put together the entire puzzle.

Last summer at the Chicago Comic Con, I had a wonderful lunch with John and his wife, Kim Yale. They had been married just a month before and this was my first opportunity to meet her. She is a vivacious, flirtatious, intelligent young woman with a biting wit and a lovely voice. We flirt continually on the phone, much to John's chagrin. My phone messages have become routine: "John, where's the next script. Hi, Kim, want to breathe heavy?"

During that lunch, we talked about a year's worth of SUICIDE SQUAD plotting. It became apparent that we wanted to concentrate on Deadshot, but it didn't

feel right to slight the others in the line-up. "What about a mini-series?" I asked while John choked on his cole slaw. "I'm up to my ears with work, how could I," he sputtered. As we talked, it became apparent that Kim was having a fine time writing with John on the *New America* mini-series for Eclipse and the various "Munden's Bar" stories for the back of *Grimjack* for First. A light bulb lit up somewhere. "What if Kim cowrote Deadshot with you?"

"That's what works." —Deadshot

It's rare to see John's eyes grow wide. But they did and he nodded his head vigorously. Kim smiled and loved the idea, since she thought what John was doing with Floyd Lawton was good but didn't take things far enough.

Later that day, I approached the powers that be, who happened to also be at the convention, about a DEADSHOT mini-series, and they liked the idea. Much later, John, Kim and I figured out when to fit the story into the continuity and we got the schedule we wanted.

John and Kim turned in a very depressing, grim and grabbing proposal that formalized the mini-series going on our schedule. So, of course, the question became, Who would draw this masterpiece?

Easily enough, we found our artist right in our backyard. Just as John has been stretching a bit as a writer, SUICIDE SQUAD penciller Luke McDonnell has wanted to try some new tricks that he couldn't pull off in just the pencils. He wanted to try inking. I was amenable to trying him out on an issue and he inked issue #14 to rave reviews. It became obvious that Luke has a lot of untapped talent and all he needed was a venue for his abilities.

I showed him the DEADSHOT proposal and he liked what he read. "So, ya wanna pencil *and* ink the mini-series?" I asked him. It's even rarer to see Luke get visually excited about something, and that day he practically danced in the restaurant. We think the results are striking.

SS letterer Todd Klein designed the logo for us and we had the ball rolling. Luke wound up submitting four sets of cover ideas. It was a wonderful afternoon for Senior Art Director Rich Bruning, Associate Art Director Keith S. Wilson and me as we dissected and reassembled Luke's cover ideas. We wound up with a hybrid of two of the ideas, and Luke seemed real pleased. He went home, pencilled and inked the four covers and then took a vacation. He wisely thought one was in order before pencilling the SQUAD and pencilling and inking DEADSHOT for four months.

And here we are. Next month we'll talk a bit about our creators. While many of you know John and Luke, you don't know Kim. Issue #3 will see some early mail and issue #4 will see some additional mail. Obviously, this means we want your comments. Or criticisms. Not everyone is going to like the picture we are painting about Floyd as a character or the lives he left behind.

Next Month: Floyd begins to find clues to his son's whereabouts, while Marnie finds herself confronting Floyd's father, and he is not at all the kind of daddy she expected. A few more mysteries are mixed into the pot, and there will be loads of chilling action. Join us, won't you? Until then, keep smiling!

—Bob Greenberger

DEADSHOT